

Transcript of Reagan's Address to the U.N. General Assembly

Following is a transcript of President Reagan's address to the United Nations General Assembly yesterday, as recorded by The New York Times:

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, distinguished heads of state, ministers, representatives and guests:

First of all, I wish to congratulate President Luskas on his election as President of the General Assembly. I wish you every success, Mr. President, in carrying out the responsibilities of this high international office. It is an honor to be here, and I thank you for your gracious invitation.

I would speak in support of the two goals that led to the formation of this organization — the cause of peace and the cause of human dignity.

The responsibility of this Assembly, the peaceful resolution of disputes between peoples and nations, has been discharged successfully only if we recognize the great common ground upon which we all stand.

Our fellowship as members of the human race, our oneness as inhabitants of this planet, our place as representatives of billions of our fellow men — these fondest hopes remain the end to war and to the repression of the human spirit — these are the great realities that bind us, that permit us to dream of a future without the antagonisms of the past.

How Much Is Right?

And just as shadows have been seen only where there is light, so too can we overcome what is wrong only if we remember how much is right. And we will resolve what divides us only if we remember how much we unite us. This chamber has heard enough about the problems and dangers ahead. Today let us dare to speak of a future that is bright and hopeful and can be ours only if we take action. I believe that future is far nearer than most of us would dare to hope.

At the start of this decade, one school at the Hudson State noted that mankind also had undergone enormous changes for the better in the two centuries since 1600. They aren't always readily noticed or written about.

Up until 200 years ago, there were relatively few people in the world," he wrote. "All human societies were poor, disease and early death were most people's lives. People were ignorant and largely at the mercy of the forces of nature."

"Now," he said, "we are somewhere near the middle of a process of economic development. At the end of that process, almost all people live in a country as poor as the richest country of the past. There will be many more people living in comfort with immense knowledge and more to learn than any people have time for. They will be able to cope with the forces of nature, and almost indifferent to them."

For Peace and Dignity

Well, we do live today as the scholar suggested — in the middle of the most important and dramatic periods in human history, one in which all of us can serve as catalysts for an era of world peace and unimagined human freedom and dignity.

And today I would like to report to you, as distinguished and influential members of the world community, what the United States has been doing to do to help move the world closer to this era.

On many fronts enormous progress

Delegates listening yesterday as President Reagan addressed session of the United Nations General Assembly.

has been made. And I think our efforts are complemented by the trend of history. If we look closely enough, I believe we can see all the world moving toward a deeper appreciation of the value of human freedom in both its political and economic manifestations.

This is partially motivated by a widespread desire for economic growth and higher standards of living. And there's an increasing realization that economic freedom is a prelude to economic progress and growth and is intricately and inseparably linked to political freedom.

Everywhere people and governments are beginning to recognize that the secret of a progressive society is to take advantage of the creativity of the human spirit, to encourage innovation and individual enterprise, to reward hard work and reduce barriers to the free flow of trade and information.

Trade and Freedom

Our opposition to economic restrictions and trade barriers is consistent with our view of economic freedom and human progress. We believe such barriers pose a particularly dangerous threat to the developing nations and their chance to share in world prosperity through expanded export markets.

Tomorrow at the International Monetary Fund, I will address the question more fully, including America's desire for more open trading markets throughout the world. This desire to cut down trade barriers and our open advocacy of freedom as the engine of human progress are with us with immense knowledge and more to learn than any people have time for. They will be able to cope with the forces of nature, and almost indifferent to them."

In this place these steps more to place by briefly outlining the major goals of American foreign policy and the steps we are attempting to further freedom and prevent war.

By that I mean, first, how we have moved to strengthen ties with old allies and new friends. Second, what we're doing to help bring about a decision to cut down trade barriers that could contain the seeds of world conflagration. And third, the status of our efforts with the United Nations to reduce the level of arms.

Objectives of U.S. Policy

Let me begin with a word about the objectives of American foreign policy, which have been constant since the formation of the United Nations and were incorporated into the U.N. Charter itself.

The U.N. Charter states two overriding goals: "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in the basic rights of the human person, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small."

The founders of the United Nations understood full well the relationship between these two goals. And I want you to know that the Government of the United States will continue to view this concern for human rights as the moral center of our foreign policy. We can never look at anyone's freedom as a bargaining chip in world politics.

Our hope is for a time when all the people of the world share the basic blessings of personal liberty. But I would like also to emphasize that our concern for protecting human rights is part of our concern for protecting the peace.

Link of Rights and Peace

The answer is for all nations to fulfill the obligations they freely assumed under the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. It states: "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government. This shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections."

The declaration also includes these rights: "to form and to join trade unions," "to own property alone as well as in association with others," "to leave any country including his own and to return to his country" and to enjoy "freedom of opinion and expression."

Perhaps the most graphic example of the relationship between human rights and peace is the right of people groups to exist and to promote their views. In fact, the treatment of people groups is a litmus test for peace.

In addition to emphasizing this tie between the advocacy of human rights and the prevention of war, the United States has taken important steps, as I mentioned earlier, to prevent world conflict.

The starting point and cornerstone of our foreign policy is our alliance

and partnership with our fellow democracies. For 35 years the Atlantic Alliance has guaranteed the peace in Europe.

Alliances and Peace

In both Europe and Asia, our alliances have been the great force for reconciliation among nations that had fought bitter wars in decades and centuries past. And here in the Western Hemisphere, north and south are being lifted on the tide of freedom and are joined in a common cause to foster peaceful economic development.

We're proud of our association with all these countries, which share our commitment to freedom, human rights, the rule of law and international peace.

Indeed, the bulwark of security that the democratic alliance provides is essential and remains essential to the maintenance of world peace. Every alliance involves burdens and obligations, but these are far less than the risks and sacrifices that would result if the peace-loving nations were divided and neglectful of their common security.

The people of the United States will remain faithful to their commitments. But the United States is also faithful to its alliances and friendships with scores of nations in the developed and developing worlds with differing political systems, cultures and traditions.

The development of ties between the United States and China, a significant global event of the last dozen years, shows our willingness to improve relations with countries formerly regarded as enemies.

We're ready to be the friend of any country that is a friend to us and a friend to peace. And we respect genuine nonalignment.

Principle of Universality

Our own nation was born in revolution. We helped promote the process of decolonization that brought about the independence of so many members of this body. And we're proud of that history.

We're proud, too, of our role in the formation of the United Nations and the authority of governments. This will be expressed in periodic and genuine elections."

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Threat of Regional Conflicts

But any economic progress as well as any movement in the direction of greater understanding between the nations of the world are, of course, endangered by the prospect of conflict at both the global and regional level.

In a few minutes, I will turn to the menace of conflict in the Middle East and discuss the status of negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union to curtail the regional conflicts, for history displays evidence that it is these regional conflicts that set off the sparks leading to worldwide conflagration.

In a glass display case across the hall from the White House at the White House there is a gold medal, the Nobel Peace Prize won by Theodore Roosevelt for his mediation of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. It was the first prize won by an American, and it's part of the tradition of which the American people are very proud, a tradition that is being continued today in many regions of the world.

U.S. Effort in Africa

We're engaged, for example, in diplomacy to resolve conflicts in southern Africa. Working with the African Alliance and our partners in the contact group, Mozambique and South Africa have reached an historic decision to end aggression and cooperation. South Africa and Angola have agreed on a disengagement of forces from Angola, and the group has been laid for the independence of Namibia with virtually all aspects of Security Council Resolution 435 agreed upon.

Let me add that the United States considers it a moral imperative that South Africa's racial policies evolve peacefully but decisively toward a system compatible with basic norms of justice, liberty and human dignity. I'm pleased that American companies in South Africa, by providing equal employment opportunities, are helping to bring about the economic advancement of the black population. But clearly much more must be done.

In Central America, the United States has lent support to a diplomatic process to restore regional peace and security. We've committed substantial resources to promote economic development and social progress. The growing success of democracy in El Salvador is the best proof that the key to peace lies in a political solution.

Appeal to Nicaragua

Free elections brought into office a Government dedicated to democracy, reform, economic progress and respect for human rights. We urge the forces in the region eager to thwart democratic change. But these forces are now on the defensive. The United States will continue to support the democratic change in the region of freedom.

We call upon Nicaragua in particular to abandon its policies of subversion and militarism and to carry out the promises it made to the Organization of American States to establish democratic elections.

The Middle East has known more than its share of tragedy and conflict for decades. And the United States has been actively involved in peace diplomacy for just as long.

We consider ourselves a full partner in the quest for peace. The record of the 11 years since the October war shows that much can be achieved through negotiations. We also show that the road is long and hard.

Two years ago, I proposed a fresh start toward peace in the Middle East to the Arab-Israeli conflict. My initiative of Sept. 1, 1962, contains a set of positions that can serve as a basis for a just and lasting peace. That initiative remains a realistic and workable approach, and I am committed to it as firmly as on the day I announced it.

Relations With Soviet Union

The United States has been and will always be a friend of peaceful solutions. This is no less true with respect to my country's relations with the Soviet Union.

I am pleased before you last year, I said that we cannot count on the instinct for survival alone to protect us against war. Diplomacy is necessary but not sufficient. America has repaired its strength. We have invigorated our alliances and friendships. We are ready for constructive

that we need to take. You know, as I stand here and look out from this podium, there in front of me I can see the seat of the representative of the Soviet Union. And not far from that seat, just over to the side, is the seat of the representative of the United States. In this historic assembly hall, it's clear there's not a great distance between us. Outside this room, while there will still be clear differences, there's every reason why we should do all that is possible to shorten that distance. And that's why we're here. Isn't that what this organization is all about?

Last Jan. 18, I set out three objectives for U.S.-Soviet relations that can provide an agenda for our work over the months ahead. First, I said, we need to find ways to reduce and eventually to eliminate the threat and use of force in solving international disputes. Our concern over the potential for nuclear war cannot deflect us from the terrible human tragedies occurring every day in the regional conflicts I just discussed. Therefore, we have a particular responsibility to contribute to political solutions to these problems rather than to exacerbate them through the provision of even more weapons.

I propose that our two countries agree to a series of periodic consultations at policy level about regional problems. We will be prepared, if the Soviets agree, to make senior experts available at regular intervals for in-depth exchanges of views. I've asked Secretary Shultz to explore this with Foreign Minister Gromyko.

Spheres of influence are a thing of the past. Differences between American and Soviet interests are not. The objectives of this political dialogue will be to help avoid miscalculation, reduce the potential risk of nuclear confrontation and help the people in areas of conflict to find peaceful solutions.

The United States and the Soviet Union have achieved agreements of historic importance on some regional problems. The Sino-Soviet state treaty and the Berlin accords are notable and lasting examples.

Let us resolve to achieve similar agreements in the future.

Our second task must be to find ways to reduce the vast stockpiles of armaments in the world. I've committed to rebuilding our negotiating efforts to achieve real results. In Geneva, a complete ban on chemical and biological weapons, real reductions to lower and equal levels in Soviet and American, Warsaw Pact and NATO conventional forces, concrete practical measures to enhance mutual confidence, to reduce the risk of war and to realize our common goal concerning nonuse of force.

In the field of nuclear testing, I've proposed a moratorium, essential to insure compliance with the threshold test ban of peaceful nuclear explosions agreed to by the two superpowers. In the field of nonproliferation, we've agreed to strengthen the international instruments and practices aimed at halting the spread of nuclear weapons together with reduced efforts to meet the legitimate needs of all nations for peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Our hope is that hostilities will soon end, leaving each side with political and territorial integrity in tact so that we may devote their energies to addressing the needs of their people and a return to relationships with other states.

Lessons of Experience

The lesson of experience is that negotiations work. A peace treaty between Israel and Egypt brought about the peaceful return of the Sinai. Clearly showing that the negotiating process brings results when the parties commit themselves to it. The time is bound to come when the same wisdom and courage will be applied with success to reach peace between Israel and all of its Arab neighbors in a manner that assures security for all in the region, the recognition of the right of the Jewish people to a state and a solution to the Palestinian problem.

In every part of the world, the United States is similarly engaged in peace diplomacy as an active player or a strong supporter. In Southeast Asia, we have backed the efforts of the United States to bring about a peaceful resolution of the Cambodian problem, which must include the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces and the election of a representative government. ASEAN's success in promoting economic and political cooperation has made a major contribution to the peace and stability of the region.

And in Afghanistan, the dedicated efforts of the Secretary General and his representatives to find a peaceful settlement have our strong support. I assure you that the United States will continue to do everything possible to find a negotiated outcome which will give the Afghan people with the right to determine their own destiny, along with the right to refuse to return to their own country and dignity and protect the legitimate security interests of all neighboring countries.

On the divided and tense Korean peninsula, we have strongly backed the confidence-building efforts of the Republic of Korea and by the U.N. command at Panmunjom. These are an important step toward peaceful reunification in the long term.

We take heart from progress by the Soviet Union in the Middle East. I believe this is a view shared by virtually every country in the world. And I believe it is a view that we must all share. I want to speak to you today on what the United States and the Soviet Union can accomplish together in the spirit to bear.

Of course, summit meetings have a useful role to play, but they need to be carefully prepared. And the benefit here is that meetings at the ministerial level would provide the progress that is the best preparation for higher-level talks between ourselves and the Soviet leaders.

How much progress we will make and at what pace I can't say. But we have a moral obligation to try and work. Now some may dismiss such proposals and my own optimism as simplistic American idealism, and that's the burden of the modern world and to history.

Well, yes, if we sit down and catalog year by year, generation by generation, the famines, the plagues, the wars, the invasions mankind has endured, the list will grow so long and the assault on humanity will seem so much for the human spirit to bear.

will substantially reduce their own nuclear arsenals. We and the Soviets have agreed to upgrade our hotline communications facility. And our discussions of nuclear nonproliferation in recent years have been useful to both sides. We think there are other possibilities for improving communications in this area that deserve serious exploration.

Proposal for Vienna Talks

I believe the proposal of the Soviet Union for opening U.S.-Soviet talks in Vienna provided an important opportunity to advance these objectives.

We've been prepared to discuss a wide range of issues of concern to both sides, such as the relationship between defensive and offensive forces and what has been called the militarization of space.

During the talks, we would consider what measures of restraint both sides might take while negotiations proceed. However, any agreement must be logically dependent upon our ability to get the competition in offensive arms under control and to achieve genuine stability at substantially lower levels of nuclear arms.

Our approach in all these areas will be designed to take into account our historic breakthrough in arms control.

I'm disappointed that we were not able to open our meeting in Vienna earlier this month on the date originally proposed by the Soviet Union. I hope we can begin these talks by the end of the year or shortly thereafter.

Progress on Cooperation

The third task I set in January was to establish a better working relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States, one marked by greater cooperation and understanding.

We've made some modest progress. We have reached agreements to improve our hotline, extend our 10-year economic agreement, enhance consular cooperation and explore courses of search and rescue efforts at sea. We've also offered to increase significantly the amount of U.S. grain shipments to the Soviet Union and to provide the Soviets a direct fishing allocation off U.S. coasts.

But there's much more we could do together. I feel particularly strongly about breaking down the barriers between the peoples of the United States and the Soviet Union and between our political, military and other leaders.

Now, all of these steps that I've mentioned and especially the arms control negotiations, are extremely important to a step-by-step process toward peace. But let me also say that we must extend the arms control process to build a bigger umbrella under which it can operate.

I am committed to rebuilding our negotiating efforts to achieve real results. In Geneva, a complete ban on chemical and biological weapons, real reductions to lower and equal levels in Soviet and American, Warsaw Pact and NATO conventional forces, concrete practical measures to enhance mutual confidence, to reduce the risk of war and to realize our common goal concerning nonuse of force.

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Specific Steps to Peace

Today, to the great end of lifting the dread of nuclear war from the peoples of the earth, I invite the leaders of the world to join in a new beginning. A new era of peace and reducing international tensions. History demonstrates beyond controversy that it is not in political suspicion and anxieties, so it can be channeled in more stabilizing directions and eventually be eliminated if those political suspicions and anxieties are addressed as well.

I will suggest to the Soviet Union that we institutionalize regular ministerial or cabinet-level meetings between our two governments to discuss a wide range of issues before us, including the problem of needless obstacles to understanding. To take back in this understanding and reciprocity in a manner that will enable the two countries to establish the basis for a visitation for effective limits on underground nuclear testing.

Spring of 1985 Is the Goal

We should work toward having such arrangements in place by next spring. I hope that the two countries will cooperate in this undertaking and reciprocate in a manner that will enable the two countries to establish the basis for a visitation for effective limits on underground nuclear testing.

I believe such talks could work rapidly toward developing a new climate of political understanding, one that is essential if crises are to be avoided and real arms control is to be negotiated.

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